

# Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at Montgomery County Junior and Infant School, Baronswood Way, Colchester, Essex

June 2014



report prepared by Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks

on behalf of Essex County Council  
Infrastructure Delivery Team

CAT project ref.: 14/6c  
ECCPS code: CCMS14  
NGR: TL 9854 2249

Colchester And Ipswich Museum accession code: 2014.71



## Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,  
Circular Road North,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436273304

email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

**CAT Report 776**  
July 2014

## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	2
4	Aim	2
5	Results of the evaluation	2
6	Finds	5
7	Discussion	5
8	Acknowledgements	5
9	References	6
10	Glossary and abbreviations	6
11	Archive deposition	6
12	Contents of archive	7

Figures after p 7

EHER summary sheet

## List of figures

- Fig 1 Site location
- Fig 2 Trench plan
- Fig 3 Representative trench sections

## List of plates

Cover:	trench 4	
Plate 1:	trench 1, view south	2
Plate 2:	trench 2, view north south east west	3
Plate 3:	trench 3, view north south east west	3
Plate 4:	trench 4, view north south east west	4
Plate 5:	trench 5, view north south east west	5

## 1 Summary

*Montgomery School is within the oppidum of Camulodunum, and in an area of cropmarks which recent excavations (prior to the rebuilding of Colchester Garrison) have defined as an Iron Age and Roman rural landscape.*

*It is proposed to redevelop the site by building eight new class-bases, a play area, and expanded car parks on parts of the playing field and parking area. Five evaluation trenches (total length, 76m) revealed no Late Iron Age or Roman remains, but did identify a wide modern ditch whose fill (including barbed wire) indicates that it is almost certainly of military origin. It may be a continuation of the WWII anti-tank ditch excavated on Garrison Area 10 (1km to the north-east), in 2003.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is an archive report for archaeological investigation by trial trenching at Montgomery County Junior and Infant School, off Baronswood Way, Colchester, Essex.

The site (part of the playing field and school grounds) is currently open, partially grassed and with trees. Proposed works involve the construction of eight new class-bases, covered weather-protected links, a hard play area, and expanded staff parking. Site centre is TL 9854 2249.

Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) was consulted by Essex County Council Infrastructure Delivery Team regarding planning application CC/COL/15/14. In response to consultation, ECCPS made the following recommendation, in line with advice given in National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012):

*" L2 Implementation of Archaeological Fieldwork Programme*

*No development including any site clearance or groundworks of any kind shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents; the owner of the site or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work from an accredited archaeological contractor in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates the approved programme of archaeological work."*

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by ECCPS officer (Adrian Gascoyne). All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT in response to the Place Services brief (ECC 2014) and agreed with the Adrian Gascoyne (CAT 2014).

The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr Neil Pendrigh on behalf of ECC Infrastructure Delivery Team, and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 19th June 2014. Post-excavation work was carried out in June and July 2014.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork was carried out in accordance with CAT *Policies & Procedures* (CAT 2012), Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a), and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CIMS 2008b), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2006), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14)*, *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) was also followed.

### 3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford and Colchester Urban Archaeological Database (UAD).

The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. It is within the oppidum of Camulodunum, and to the east of the late Iron Age and Roman complex at Gosbecks. On all four sides of the site, below ground archaeological remains are identifiable as cropmarks. These include double-ditched trackway running approx 150m to the north, a prominent enclosure (living site?) 300m to the north, and fields or paddocks to the north-east and south-east, east. The site of an Iron Age/Roman enclosure was excavated at the Musket Club (150m due west), as part of the redevelopment of Colchester Garrison (CAT Report 311).

The extensive Garrison excavations (CAT/RPS Report 292, CAT Reports 311, 412) have demonstrated the existence of a multi-period (but principally Late Iron Age and Roman) rural landscape here.

### 4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains likely to be disturbed by the proposed works.

### 5 Results of the evaluation (Figs 2-3)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trenches (T1-5), with context and finds dating information.

Two layers were removed using a tracked excavator under archaeological supervision: L1 – a modern imported topsoil (150mm-thick), and L2, an accumulation deposit (250-300mm thick). Removal of L2 revealed natural cover loam with patches of sand and gravel (L3).

#### Trench 1: summary

T1, positioned in the north-western site corner, revealed no archaeological features identified. The southern end of the trench had been disturbed by tree roots of (removed) cherry trees.



Plate 1: trench 1, view south

**Trench 2: summary**

T2, positioned on the eastern site edge in the area in the footprint of a temporary class base, revealed no archaeological features.



*Plate 2: trench 2, view north*

**Trench 3: summary**

T3, positioned in the southern part of the site and in the footprint of the proposed infants' school, revealed no archaeological features.



*Plate 3: trench 3, view south*

#### Trench 4: summary

T4, positioned in the southern part of the site and in the footprint of the proposed infants' school, revealed no prehistoric or Roman features. However at the eastern end of T4 was a large modern feature (F1) whose fill contained modern material such as ash, brick fragments and barbed wire. Given the site's location in the Garrison, this strongly suggests a military origin for this feature. It may possibly be one of the WWII anti-tank ditches forming part of the Colchester stop line. This ditch was seen in the Area 10 excavation in 2003 (CAT/RPS Report 292). If the Area 10 ditch were to deflect slightly south off its Area 10 trajectory, it might cross the current site.



Plate 4: trench 4, view east.

#### Trench 4: archaeology

Context no	type	dated finds	period
F1	ditch	brick, barded wire	modern

### **Trench 5: summary**

T3, positioned in the southern part of the site and in the footprint of the proposed infants' school, revealed no archaeological features.



*Plate 5: trench 5, view south*

## **6 Finds**

There were fragments of modern brick, peg-tile and barbed wire in the fill of pit F1. None of this material was retained.

## **7 Discussion**

The archaeological context of this site is that it lies within the oppidum of Camulodunum, and within a cropmark complex of enclosures, trackways and fields which recent excavation has shown to be a Late Iron Age and Roman rural landscape. Given this context, it is surprising that there were no prehistoric or Roman features on this site. However, it may be concluded that the site coincides with an area of open land in the LIA/Roman period, and that no field boundaries coincide with the current site.

The only point of interest is ditch F1 in T4. This modern feature shares similarities with the 20th-century anti-tank ditch excavated in 2003 in Area DRI (also Area 10) 1.1km to the north-east (CAT Rep 292). This feature formed part of the Colchester 'stop line' - part of a series of defensive positions constructed in the early part of the Second World War against the threat of German invasion. The dimensions of F1 and the contents of its upper fills (brick and barbed wire fragments) make it very likely to be the same feature, which only needs to deflect slight south off its Area 10 trajectory to cross the current site.

## **8 Acknowledgements**

CAT thanks Neil Pendrigh on behalf of ECC Infrastructure Delivery Team for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by Ben Holloway, and the fieldwork was carried out by BH, P Skippins, and N Griggs. Site plans were prepared by Mark Baister, and sections by Emma Holloway. The project was monitored for ECC Place Services by Adrian Gascoyne.

## 9 References

CAT	2012	<i>Policies and Procedures</i>
CAT	2014	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological evaluation and potential excavation at Montgomery Infant and Junior School, Colchester, Essex. May 2014</i>
CAT Report 311	2005	An archaeological excavation and watching brief at the Musket Club, Homefield Road, Colchester, Essex, December 2004-February 2005. CAT report prepared by Howard Brooks
CAT Report 412	2011	<i>Archaeological investigations on the 'Alienated Land', Colchester Garrison, Colchester, Essex. May 2004-October 2007</i> Report by L Pooley, P Crummy, D Shimmin, H Brooks, B Holloway, and R Masefield (RPS)
CAT/RPS Report 292	2005	<i>The Colchester Garrison PFI project, Colchester, Essex: a report on the 2003 excavation of Areas 2, 6, 10 August-November 2003.</i> Report prepared by Howard Brooks (CAT) and Robert Masefield (RPS)
CIMS	2008a	<i>Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester (CBC)</i>
CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CBC)</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> , Department for Communities and Local Government
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> East Anglian Archaeological, Occasional Papers, 14, ed by D Gurney
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers, 24, ed by M Medlycott
ECC	2014	<i>Brief for archaeological evaluation trenching and potential excavation at the Montgomery Infant and Junior School, Colchester</i> , by Adrian Gascoyne. 27/5/2014
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation.</i> Institute for Archaeologists.
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Institute for Archaeologists.

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

context	specific location of finds an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
Late Iron Age	circa 150 BC – AD 43
Modern	19th-21st centuries
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

## 11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum under accession code COLEM 2014.71

## 12 Contents of Archive

One A4 document wallet containing:  
This report  
Original site records and notes  
ECC Brief and CAT WSI  
Sundry papers  
Photos index, and photos on CD

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### Distribution list:

Neil Pendrigh, Essex County Council Infrastructure Delivery Team  
Donavon Stewart Barnes construction  
Natalie Launder, School Business Manager, Montgomery Junior School  
Adrian Gascoyne Essex County Council Place Services  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



### Colchester Archaeological Trust Roman Circus House

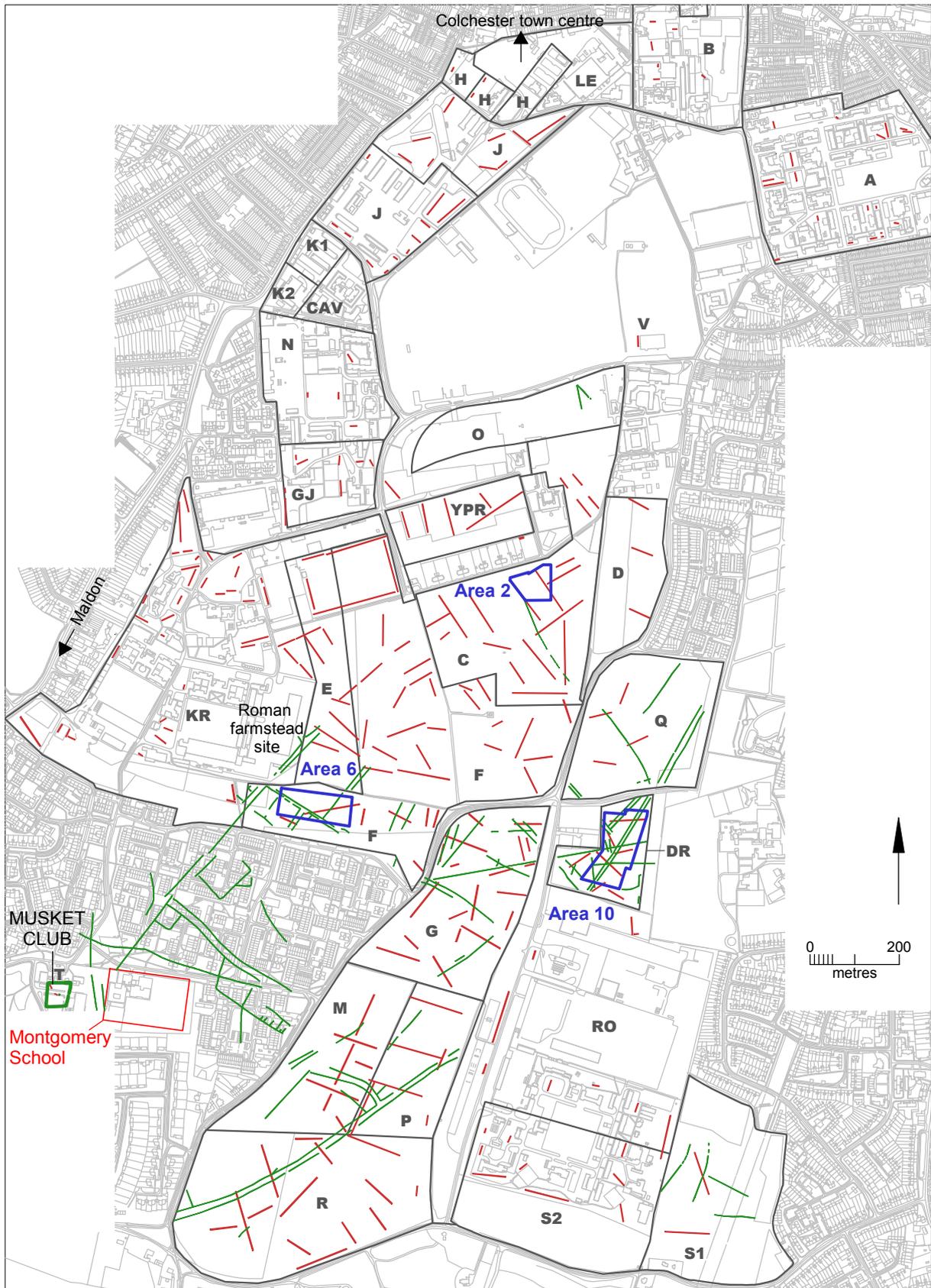
Circular Road North,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436 273 304

email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 8.7.14



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- 2002 trench
- 2004 trench
- cropmark/geophysical anomaly
- redevelopment area

Fig 1 Colchester Garrison, showing location of Montgomery School.



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Fig 2 Evaluation results.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> Montgomery Junior School, Baronswood Way, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> NGR: TL 9854 2249	<b>Site code:</b> CAT project code – 14/6c HET Code – CCMS14
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 20th June 2014	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 76m (linear)
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Colchester & Ipswich Museum accession code: 2014.71	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER number:</b> --
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 776	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>Montgomery School is within the oppidum of Camulodunum, and in an area of cropmarks which recent excavations (prior to the rebuilding of Colchester Garrison) have defined as an Iron Age and Roman rural landscape.</i></p> <p><i>It is proposed to redevelop the site by building eight new class-bases, a play area, and expanded car parks on parts of the playing field and parking area. Five evaluation trenches (total length, 76m) revealed no Late Iron Age or Roman remains, but did identify a wide modern ditch whose fill (including barbed wire) indicates that it is almost certainly of military origin. It may be a continuation of the WWII anti-tank ditch excavated on Garrison Area 10 (1km to the north-east), in 2003.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> --	
<b>Keywords:</b> WWII ditch	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Ben Holloway	<b>Date of summary:</b> July 2014